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INCOMING TELEGRAM Department of State

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R 231126Z JUNE 67
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WA DC
MFO RUMTBK/AMEMBASS BANGKOK
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RUMJFS/AMEMBASSY VIENTIAN
STATE GRNC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 28678

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY Joan Izenberg DATE 10/5/81
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TS AUTH. ____ REASON (3)
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
DECLASSIFIED ☑ RELEASABLE ☑
RELEASE DENIED ☐
PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

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REF: A) SAIGON 28423; B) SAIGON 25551

1. RETIRED GENERAL TRAN VAN DON TOLD EMBOFF JUNE 23 THAT THERE IS NO TRUTH TO RUMOR (REPORTED REFERENCE A) THAT HE WILL RUN FOR VICE PRESIDENT ON PRIME MINISTER KY'S TICKET. HE BELIEVES

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THAT HE IS INELIGIBLE TO RUN BECAUSE OF HIS FORMER FRENCH CITIZENSHIP. DON OBSERVED THAT IFHE COULD RUN FOR VICE PRESIDENT HE WOULD ALSO BE ELIGIBLE TO RUN FOR PRESIDENT AND THAT IS THE OFFICE HE WOULD SEEK.
2. DON AGAIN TOLD EMBOFF THAT HE INTENDS TO RUN FOR THE SENATE, AND HE REITERATED HIS PLAN TO PUT TOGETHER A TICKET COMBINING REPRESENTATIVES OF WORKERS, PEASANTS AND MILITARY PERSONNEL (REPORTED REFERENCE B). HE STATED THAT DANG VAN SUNG, FULRO ASSEMBLY DEPUTY KSOR TOT AND THAI LAND NGHIEM (SEE BELOW) WILL BE ON HIS TICKET, ALONG WITH "SOME" FROM THE CVT LABOR

(1) UNION AND POSSIBLY SOME REPRESENTATIVES OF THE HOA HAO AND CAO DAI. HE SAID THAT TRAN VAN TUYEN WILL HEAD ANOTHER ASSOCIATED TICKET. ASKED ABOUT ORGANIZATION FOR HIS CAMPAIGN, DON SEEMED UNABLE TO GIVE ANY DETAILS AND REFERRED EMBOFF TO SUNG FOR AN ACCOUNT OF ORGANIZATIONAL ACTIVITIES.
3. DON AGAIN SAID THAT HE PREFERS KY TO ANY OF THE OTHER PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES, BUT ADDED THAT HIS GROUP HAS NOT YET DECIDED WHETHER OR NOT TO SUPPORT KY. HE CRITICIZED TRAN VAN HUONG'S TICKET AS TOO NARROWLY SOUTHERN AND TOO EXCLUSIVELY CIVILIAN, SAYING THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT SHOULD

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BE REGIONALLY BALANCED AND A MIXTURE OF MILITARY AND CIVILIAN LEADERS. HE ALSO EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT HUONG AND HIS SUPPORTERS ARE "THINKING ABOUT COOPERATION WITH THE VIET CONG". ASKED WHAT HE MEANT BY THIS, DON SAID HE FEARS THAT HUONG, SHOULD HE BE ELECTED, WOULD TRY TO END THE WAR BY OFFERING TO ALLOW THE LIBERATION FRONT TO OPERATE AS A LEGAL POLITICAL PARTY.

4. ASKED ABOUT PRESS REPORTS CONCERNING HIS NEW ORGANIZATION, THE " FREEDOM FIGHTERS", DON CLAIMED THAT THIS IS NOT A POLITICAL ORGANIZATION AND SAID IT WILL NOT SUPPORT HIS CANDIDACY. HE COMMENTED THAT HE AND GENERAL KIM MET WITH BOTH KY AND THIEU IN SEEKING AUTHORITY TO SET UP THE "FREEDOM FIGHTERS", AND HE DENIED THAT THE ORGANIZATION FAVORS KY'S BID FOR PRESIDENT. DON CLAIMED THAT THE PURPOSE OF THE ORGANIZATION IS TO STUDY SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS.

5. COMMENT: (A) DON'S INTENTIONS REMAIN RATHER UNCLEAR, AND WE JUDGE THAT HE IS STILL FISHING FOR THE BEST POLITICAL DEAL HE CAN GET. HOWEVER, IT DOES APPEAR NEARLY CERTAIN THAT HE WILL END UP RUNNING FOR THE SENATE. WE ALSO JUDGE THAT HE IS LIKELY TO SUPPORT KY'S BID FOR THE PRESIDENCY, AND DESPITE HIS DIS-

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CLAIMER, THE "FREEDOM FIGHTERS" IS PROBABLY INTENDED TO SERVE AS A POLITICAL VEHICLE FOR HIM AND HIS FRIENDS.
(B) DON'S COMMENTS ABOUT HUONG REVEA HIS ANTIPATHY TOWARD HUONG AND HIS SUPPORTERS, BUT THEY DO NOT NECESSARILY REFLECT ANY FIRM INFORMATION ON HUONG'S INTENTIONS TOWARD THE LIBERATION FRONT.
(C) THAI LANG NGHIEM IS A MINOR POLITICAL FIGURE ASSOCIATED WITH THE DAI VIET DUY DAN PARTY. WE DOUBT HE WILL ADD ANY SIGNIFICANT VOTER APPEAL TO THE DON-SUNG TICKET.
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